

*The Advantages of a National Observance of
Divine and Human Laws.*

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A N 7.
ASSIZE SERMON

Preach'd at

MAIDSTONE in KENT

On the 13th of March 1733-4

BEFORE THE

Lord Chief Baron RETNOLDS.

*Publish'd at the Request of the HIGH-SHERIFF,
and Gentlemen of the GRAND-JURY.*

By JAMES BATE, M. A. Rector of St.
Paul's, Deptford.



L O N D O N,

Printed for John Whiston, at Mr. Boyle's Head in
Fleetstreet. M DCC XXXIV.

The Journal of a National Conference of
Farmers and Home Owners

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THE JOURNAL

Published at

THE JOURNAL OF FARMERS AND HOME OWNERS

Vol. 1, No. 1, 1914

NEW YORK

JOHN J. BROWN, Editor

Published by the National Farmers' Union

and the National Home Owners' Union

100 West 42nd Street, New York City

Subscription Price, \$1.00 per Annum



Entered as Second-Class Matter, May 1, 1914, at New York, N. Y., under Post Office No. 100,000, Post Office at New York, N. Y., and for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 1, 1918.

Printed for John J. Brown, at No. 100 West 42nd Street, New York City

T O

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Of *Deptford*, Knight,

HIGH-SHERIFF of *KENT*.

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GENTLEMEN,

TH O' the kind and candid Manner in which you were pleased so unanimously, to express your Sentiments of this Discourse at *Maidstone*, might embolden me to offer it you in Print; Yet 'tis wholly in Compliance with your Desire, that I venture it abroad: for I wrote

D E D I C A T I O N.

wrote it (as I thought) with a fixt Resolution not to publish it. But notwithstanding the Reluctance with which I appear in Print, I do however gladly lay hold of this Publick Opportunity of attesting that I am, with the utmost Sincerity and Respect,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most Obedient

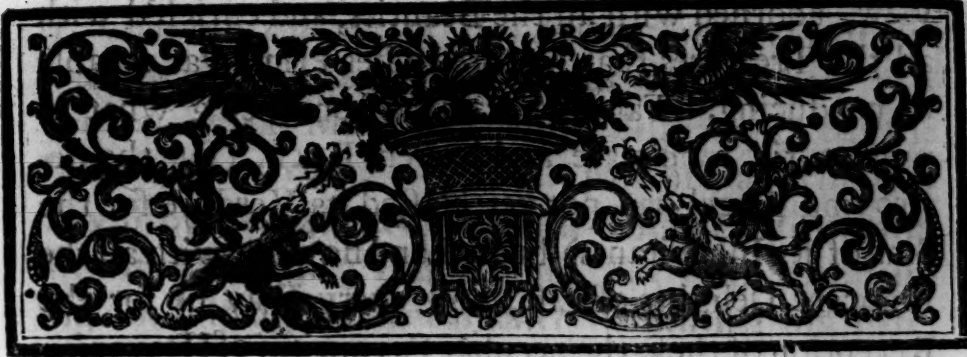
Humble Servant

Deptford, March

20, 1733-4.

JAMES BATE.

DEUT.



DEUT. iv. Ver. 6.

Keep therefore and do them, for this is your Wisdom and your Understanding in the Sight of the Nations, which shall hear all these Statutes, and say, Surely this great Nation is a wise and understanding People.



IN the close of the foregoing Chapter, we have a particular Account of the Manner, in which the divine Lawgiver of the *Jews* resigns his sacred Commission into the Hands of God; and delivers up the Conduct of the chosen Seed to him, whom the divine Providence had raised up to that Intent. He was now arrived at the very Verge of *Palestine*, whither he had conducted his People with Success and Reputation, thro' all the various Scenes and Accidents of Life, into which God's Providence thought fit to lead them. The promised Land, where-

in the good Man hop'd to reap the Reward of all his faithful Services, lay now within the Compass of his view, adorned with all the Beauties, and enrich'd with all the Treasures that Nature in her Prime was capable of producing. Far was it then from being what at present 'tis, a desolate and barren Rock, (for the destroying Angel had not yet blasted its Verdure for the Sins of its Inhabitants) but a Land flowing with all the innocent Delights of Life, and every Way fit for the Reception of these the peculiar Favourites of Heaven.

The good Man *Moses*, now ready to enter on this Land of Promise, desires, as was but natural, and longs with all the Fondness of an indulgent Parent of his People, to see these his Children safely settled in the Land of their Desire. But it pleased the divine Providence not to indulge him in this his last and fondest Wish, but to reward his Labours in another Manner, and a better Place. The Delights of *Palestine* were denyed him to enjoy, and only a distant view of it was granted him from the heights of Mount *Pisgah*. And as it rarely happens in the Course of God's Providence, that great Events are fully compleated by their first Projectors, so happen'd it to *Moses*, for *Joshua* was ordained to head the chosen People over *Jordan*, and to put them in Possession of the promised Land. And *Moses*, when he so pathetically and so earnestly begs of God, *to see the good Land beyond Jordan, Lebanon, and that goodly Mountain*, receives an Answer greatly different from his Wish and Expectation: *For, says the Lord, let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this Matter,*

Matter, but get thee up into this Mountain Abarim, unto Mount Nebo, and from thence behold the Land of Canaan, and die in the Mount, and be gathered unto thy People. And now let us observe how this great and good Man receives his Summons from the Mouth of his Creator ; — Why he patiently and contentedly obeys the divine Command, and calmly prepares for his approaching Dissolution. Far from entertaining one Thought of effeminately lamenting his Fate; we find him animated with more noble and heroic Sentiments; and employing the last, and therefore choicest Moments of his Life, to the best Advantage and Improvement of his Countrymen. For since he found his personal Presence was to be henceforward denied them, he takes Care, however, to bequeath his very Soul and Spirit to them in his dying Speech, leaving therein a Treasure of such sound Advice, as, if well attended to, would infallibly make them a great and happy Nation. And that was to preserve a firm and inviolable Attachment to those sacred Laws and Ordinances, which God, through his Means, had given them for their Rule of Life. Behold, says he, I have taught you Statutes and Judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the Land whither ye go to possess it; and then in the Words of my Text, Keep therefore and do them, for this is your Wisdom and Understanding in the Sight of the Nations; which shall hear all these Statutes, and say, Surely this great Nation is a wise and understanding People.

In

In discoursing on which Words, I shall consider them,

I. First, In their primary and original Intention, as directed to the *Jews*, and,

II. Secondly, As they are applicable to our selves.

I. Therefore if we view them in their primary and original Intention, as directed to the *Jews*, we may observe that they contain in them, *First*, A Duty enjoined, *viz.* a punctual Observance of those civil and religious Laws, which God, by the Ministration of *Moses*, had given them: And *Secondly*, The advantageous Effects of such an Observance of those Laws, *viz.* That it would so aggrandize their Commonwealth, that all the Neighbouring Nations should esteem them to be not only a strong and potent, but also a wise and understanding People.

As to the Duty here enjoined, it would be a Task too tedious to shew that the *Mosaic* System was most admirably contriv'd to promote the Happiness and Welfare of the *Jewish* State. I shall only observe in general, that with Regard to religious Polity, it contained a compleat Body of Morality, of an Institution manifestly divine; a Benefit for many Ages vouchsafed not to other Nations, who lived without God in the World, given up to their own unruly Lusts and Passions. And secondly, that its civil Institutions were wisely calculated to keep that People compact among themselves, and without Intercourse with the neighbouring Nations,

Nations, whose Familiarity did always prove the Bane of the *Jewish* State, by poysoning their Religion, and infecting their Morals, with the Sins of Debauchery in all its Branches; Sins which naturally tend to draw down Ruin and Destruction upon even the best regulated States. The Truth of all this, and the reasonableness of this Injunction of *Moses* to his People, most evidently appear from the next Thing to be considered under this Head; which was,

The Effects which their Practice, or Non-Practice of his Laws would infallibly produce. Accordingly, if we look back upon the *Jewish* History, we may find in every Period of it, the Words of *Moses* verified to the last Exactness; and may observe the Grandeur of the *Jewish* State, in all Points of Time, to rise and fall in Proportion, as their national Practice, or neglect of God's Laws, was more or less conspicuous. To produce the several Instances of this, would be an endless Work, and oblige us to run thro' the whole *Jewish* History, from their first Foundation, to their final Dispersion. Let it suffice us to observe one Instance of each. When the Fame of the Wealth, Strength, and Wisdom of *Solomon*, so alarm'd the Nations round about him, then was the Piety and Integrity of the Prince; and Obedience of their whole Nation, to their God and their King, practised in the most conspicuous Manner. On t'other Hand, when the Ruin of their State drew near, and a long and painful Captivity awaited them; we find that a universal Dissolution of Manners, a general Contempt and Abuse of all Laws

divine and human, were the Forerunners, and, as it were the Preparatives of those heavy Judgments. Therefore, says God by the Mouth of his Prophet *Isaiah*, therefore are my People gone into Captivity, and Hell has enlarged herself, and opened her Mouth without Measure, viz. because his People regarded not the Work of the Lord, nor the Operation of his Hands, but cast away his Law, and despised his holy Word. Inflaming themselves with Wine and Riot, calling good evil, and evil good; justifying the Wicked for Reward, and with a high Hand, over-bearing the Righteousness of the Righteous." Thus were the Words of my Text, considered in their primary and original Intention, as directed to the People of the *Jews*; actually verified, according to the Prediction of *Moses*, in all the Periods of their History; it is easy therefore to judge how great and happy a Nation they might have been, had they always hearkened to this wholesome Counsel of *Moses*, by observing the divine Precepts recommended in the Text.

Nor is this Scripture of less Use or Concern to us, upon whom the Ends of the World are come, than it was to those to whom it was more directly given: Since the same is so manifestly applicable, as to all well regulated Christian States in general, so more particularly to us of this Kingdom, as I proposed to shew under my other general Head. And I think I may say these Words are more particularly applicable to ourselves, because there seems to be such a Parallelism to be easily and naturally drawn between the old *Jewish* State,

State, and us of this Nation, as by no Means seems so appositely to suit any other christian Country.

The *Jews*, by the Wisdom of God's Providence, were disjoined and separated from the rest of Mankind, by God's *positive* Laws: *We* by the *natural* Laws of our Creator, who has divided us from the rest of the habitable World, and set our Country such Bounds as will last as long as Nature herself, being as durable as her own eternal Laws. Again, the *Jews* were conducted by God's Providence to a Country flowing with Milk and Honey, abounding plenteously in all that was necessary for the Support and Comfort of its Inhabitants. — We by the same good Providence of God, are happily placed in a Land, the most compleatly adapted to promote the Health, Wealth, Strength, and the Delight and Pleasure of its Inhabitants, of any other known Country of the habitable Globe. And if any Thing less necessary, or rather more luxurious, be wanting, it is abundantly supplied us from other Countries, in return for our own Superfluities. Again, the *Jews* were so happy, as to receive even their *civil* Polity from the Mouth of God himself; *we* cannot indeed affirm so much of our *British* Laws, but thus much we may with safety say, that tho' we did not receive them immediately from God, still so peculiarly careful has his good Providence been of them, so watchfully has he guarded them in all Ages, that one would be apt to think he had a more immediate Hand in the framing of that System which he has so wonderfully preserved for so many Ages, and miraculously freed from so many

potent and dangerous Invaders. Lastly, unto the *Jews* were committed the Oracles of God, the Possession of the only true Religion; and unto us, the Happiness of being Members of the purest christian Church, corrupted in all other Countries, either by Superstition and Idolatry on one Hand, or on t'other, deprived of all Order and Decency, by the blind mistaken Zeal of furious and intemperate Reformers. So nearly do we of this Nation resemble in these several Circumstances the chosen People of God; separated like them by his eternal Laws from the rest of Mankind; at the same Time blest like them in the Possession of a Country of all others the most Productive of the Comforts and Delights of Life, and those alloyed and fullied by the fewest and smallest Inconveniences; governed by a System of wise human Laws, which tho' they have not God (as the *Jews* had) for their Author, yet have ever had him for their constant Protector, and are now become thereby, the most ancient System that any European State can boast of: and to compleat the Parallelism, we like them are blest in the Profession of the purest Faith, and the Performance of the most reasonable Service. 'Tis moreover manifest, that the Happiness and Grandeur of our State, is owing like theirs also, to the wise Contrivance and happy Administration of our civil and religious Laws: From whence it follows, that if we do but keep and do those Statutes and Ordinances to which the Greatness of our State is owing, the neighbouring Nations may then have Reason to say, that *we* also are a wise and understanding

standing People. Let us therefore, my Brethren, in all our different Stations of Life, every Man according to the best of his Abilities, be they great or small, be careful to put this Advice of *Moses* to the *Jews*, in Practice among our selves; that so, having exerted the same national Virtues, we may happily attain to the same national Blessings propos'd in my Text.

Since therefore a strict and consciencious Observation of our Laws, is naturally productive of so many and so inestimable publick Blessings, it may not be amiss to offer in the next Place, a Consideration or two, that may be of use perhaps to bring us to this Disposition of Mind, and to induce us to a prompt and chearful Observation of our Laws, and a dutiful Obedience to our lawful Governours. Now there is nothing more likely to effect this, than our entertaining a just and proper Sense both of the Wisdom and Excellency of our Laws themselves, and of their comparative Excellency above those of the neighbouring States. As to the wise and excellent Contrivance of our Laws, the very Origin of them is in some Measure a presumptive Argument for it, for we have them either from immemorial Prescription, and the confirmed Approbation of many Ages; or from the united Wisdom of the ablest, faithfullest and wisest Men we can pitch upon to represent us in our great National Council: So that they are all of them the Result, either of the Wisdom of our earliest Ancestors, confirmed by an immemorial Experience of their great Utility, or of that Wisdom of the Ancients, exalted

and improved by the Advantages of modern Discoveries. And if the bare Origin of our Laws does in some Measure evince their intrinsic Worth, so much compleatly does the Purport and general Tendency of them do. For, whether we consider that Dependence and mutual Check, which all Orders of Men amongst us have on one another, (and than which there can be no stronger *human* ties to the Performance of Duty) or whether we regard that due Temperance of Power, that wise Proportion of Liberty in the People and Power in the Prince; that neither can the Prince in Effect be a Prince at all, if he governs ill, nor the People either happy or safe, if capriciously disobedient; or whether we respect that christian and merciful Disposition of our Laws, even to Offenders, free from those Barbarities so frequently practised, and yet with so little Success, in foreign Countries; I say in these and several other Particulars that might be mentioned, we may very justly say in the Words of my Context, that surely, *There is no Nation so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous, as all this Law which is this Day set before us.*

'Tis true indeed, our Laws are said to be numerous, and sometimes intricate; but this is nothing more than the unavoidable Consequence of living in polite Society; for great Extent and Variety of Traffick, and multiplicity of Improvements in all the useful Arts of Life, must unavoidably draw upon us Multiplicity of Laws for their better Regulation. If therefore we would avoid this Inconvenience, we
 I must

must wholly divest ourselves of all Politeness, and return to our ancient Way of living, not in well built Cities, and well regulated Communities, but like *American Savages*, in our Woods and Forests. This is therefore nothing more than a small Evil necessarily resulting from a much greater Good, and is therefore to be born without repining.

As to the comparative Excellency of our Laws above those of the neighbouring Nations, those who are but little versed in foreign Countries, need not be told the Difference, and those who are not at all, will hardly believe it if they hear it. And indeed, it would be difficult to enlarge upon this Point without seeming to draw a Libel upon all or most of the neighbouring States. I shall only observe, that Foreigners of whatever Nation, who have either seen our Country, or conversed much with our Countrymen abroad, do never fail to make the Comparison, and lament the Difference.

Next to the entertaining a good Opinion of the Wisdom and Excellency of our Laws, give me leave to observe, that there cannot be a stronger Motive to the Practice and Observation of them, than what proceeds from a thorough Sense and Conviction of the Truth of our Religion, in Contradistinction, I mean, to those Principles of *Deism*, with which the World is every Day more and more infected. And doubtless one of the chief Ends of our Creator, in blessing Mankind with a Revelation of his Will, was the better Regulation and firmer Support of civil Government among his Creatures. The wise Legislators of Antiquity

tiquity, quickly found out the Necessity, of bottoming all human Laws on religious Principles, and were therefore forced, for want of a truly revealed Religion, to vamp up fictitious ones to serve the Ends of Government. And how indeed can any Government subsist without that general Bondage of all human Society, Oaths? And Oaths are a mere Jest, if their Validity be founded upon any Thing else, than a thoro' Conviction of the divine Authority of the Faith we swear by. Besides, 'tis evident Mankind are not to be dealt with, without Hopes and Fears of something to come strong enough to keep them close to their Duty, when no human Eye looks on. No Laws of Man can ever do this, for how should they reach our private Thoughts, or influence our secret Actions? Nothing can effect this, but an awful Sence of that pure and just Being, whose Existence fills all Heaven and Earth, who sees in one View, all that is in the whole Extent of the Universe, and who is privy to the minutest Thoughts that pass in all our Hearts. But where the Mind is not duly tinged with a religious Sence, little will the wisest human Laws avail, since they may easily be render'd worse than none at all by the Knavery of those who are to execute them, or by the Cunning and subtile Evasions of those who ought to obey them. A Consideration that shews us how much it behoves the Magistracy of any Country, to lend the strongest Aid they can to the good Cause of Religion, Virtue, and Morality; for when that goes to wrack, the Dissolution of all civil Government of necessity must closely follow.

And

And now, my Brethren, after this Survey of the great Excellency of those Laws by which we have the Happiness to be governed, those Laws which so manifestly tend to procure us Wealth and Strength, Peace and Plenty at Home, and Respect and Fear Abroad ; what can be more natural than to endeavour to stir up in our Selves, a zealous Inclination to contribute what we can to the Preservation and Continuance of those inestimable Blessings we reap from our present happy Constitution ? And to this End, let us be cautious to the last Degree, how we heedlessly suffer our publick Affections to be poyson'd by the Artifices of those who *pretend* indeed to be our truest Friends, but, 'tis to be feared, are in Reality our most dangerous Enemies. To those who know Mankind, the Distinction is not hard to make, if the one and the other be but put to the Test of cool and calm Reflexion. When, for Instance, we see Men labouring with all their Might, on Account of a few pretended small Errors of Government, when we see them endeavouring by all Methods, direct and indirect, to break the Union of the Prince and People ! that Union which all Men *know* is almost as terrible to our Neighbours, as even our Armaments, we may rest assured, that such Men are only *pretended* Friends to their Country ; for were they *really* so, they never would endeavour to remedy small pretended Evils, by having Recourse to that greatest Mischief that can well befall a State, namely, the bringing the Government of it into *disrepute* or Contempt of the People.

Again, It has been always usual with those who meditate the Disturbance of their Country, to endeavour to instill into us a certain chimerical Notion of a Distinction between the Interest of the Court and Country: 'Tis true indeed, that these have *sometimes* been really different: But the full and plenary Enjoyment of all our Rights and Properties, is a plain Demonstration, that at *present* there is no such Difference subsisting; and we may defy these Men to prove by any one fair and candid Argument, that this Distinction is *now* any where to be found but in their own disingenuous Writings.

In the seditious Pamphlets with which the World is daily pestered, we are told much of Bribery and Corruption, by Places of Preferment: 'Tis to be wished the Authors of them would give us a Descant upon another Kind of Corruption they have as yet told us nothing of: I mean, that most dangerous Corruption of the Heart, which proceeds, tho' not from Places of Preferment, yet from the Want of them. For among all the Springs of Action by which Mankind are moved, there are none more strong and potent, *than Envy and disappointed Ambition; none that have, in all Ages and Countries, more contributed to the Confusion and Downfall of civil Government.* How much therefore does it behove all true Lovers of their Country, to discountenance, as far as in them lies, all such pretended Patriots, as are manifestly influenced in all their Actions, by y^e follow. *terrible sort of Corruption*

tion? And let the indefatigable Zeal of these Men (which *we* see is able to unite Men, *as different as White and Black* in all other Principles) let it, I say, animate all truly loyal Subjects, to do their best to promote the the Unity, Peace, and Welfare of their Country.

Surely no Man who duly reflects on our present happy Condition, can seriously think it may easily be alter'd for the better. If the full Enjoyment of our Religion, Liberties, and Properties; the due, regular, and impartial Execution of our Laws; the extent of our Trade, and our Security from foreign Invasions; if these are Circumstances capable of rendering a Nation happy, we may then with Truth and Justice say, in the Words immediately following my Text, *What Nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all Things, that we call upon him for?*

We should be ungrateful, were we not to acknowledge that our Happiness in these several Respects, is fully compleated by the auspicious Government of a Prince, who takes the surest Methods to make us a great and happy People, namely, by endeavouring to reign over the Hearts and Affections of his Subjects; a Method, that if *we* do but *our* Duty, can hardly fail, at the same Time of making *him* a mighty Prince, and *us* a mighty Nation.—A Prince, whose warlike Bravery has shewn it self in the earliest Years of Life, and the most dangerous Scenes of War. But what redounds yet more to his Honour, and more than even the most extensive Conquests would, he has yet the Goodness to suppress that military Fire, that natu-

ral Warmth of Temper, and kindly to incline to the Arts of Peace, wholly with a View to the Good and Welfare of his People. The Instance he is now giving us of the Regard he has for the Preservation of our Religion and Laws, deserves the most grateful Returns of Duty; I mean the approaching Alliance with a Prince, who seems to inherit all the Virtues of those of his illustrious Ancestors, to whose Conduct and Bravery, the Preservation of the true Protestant Faith, the Freedom of this and another neighbouring State in our Alliance, and thereby the daily Liberties of all *Europe*, are, under God's Providence, most manifestly owing.

'Tis plain, therefore, my Brethren, that if we can but bring our selves to give Credit to the impartial Relations of our own Senses, we have at present a great deal of real and substantial Happiness at Stake; and if we do but act up to the usual good Sense of our Nation, 'tis now fully in our Power, happily to secure the same to our selves and our Posterity, for many Generations. Let us but beware *how we split upon one* dangerous Rock, and we are safe.—We are a free-born People, and therefore naturally jealous of all tyrannical Invasions of our Liberties, Rights, and Properties: And doubtless a very brave and laudable Principle it is, and we do well to cherish it. But then the Mischief of it is, that, happy as we are in these generous Notions, they are apt sometimes to produce an Evil of the most mischievous Consequence to our State. For, hence it is, that ill designing Men are of-

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ten enabled, (without having either the Truth of the Argument on their Side, or great Abilities to manage it in case they had) to raise, however, a great deal of popular Discontent against our Governours. And as we are often betrayed into this Way of thinking, by true and generous Principles misapplied, we should therefore be the more vigilant and careful how we are thereby seduced. For, as in our natural Bodies, those Diseases are often found the most dangerous which proceed from the Overflowings of a strong Constitution; so in Bodies politic, those Disorders have often the most mischievous Effects which take their Rise from the most wholesome Principles, ill applied by the Villainy of designing Men. But I am sensible, that I have the less Reason to expatiate upon this Head, because I have now the Honour to address my self to a County remarkable in our Histories, for their Loyalty to the Crown, and their firm Attachment to the true Interest of the Nation. In the Times of the grand Rebellion, our Ancestors gave a noble Instance of this loyal Spirit, by the brave * Resistance they made (hard by the Place in which we are now assembled) against the rebellious Disturbers of their Country's Peace. May *we* also be animated with a truly loyal Spirit, and not suffer our selves either to be frighten'd out of our Allegiance, by the Outcries of a drunken Rabble; or to be yet more foolishly cajoled out of it, by the puerile Declamations of their Leaders. But let us go on in our Duty, not noisily and tumultuously, but (like

* *Maidstone* Fight, Anno 1648.

true Lovers of our Country, and our Country's Peace)
peaceably and quietly, tho' steddily and resolutely.

And may our great and good Creator, continue to
shower down his choicest Blessings upon this our
happy Island; may he make us thankfully sensible of
what we enjoy; and give us Grace so to behave our
selves in all Regards, that the neighbouring Nations
may with Truth and Justice say, *Surely this great Na-
tion is not only a Potent, Rich, and Brave, but also a wise
and understanding People.*

*Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be as-
cribed, as is most justly due, all Honour and Glory, Might,
Majesty, and Dominion, from this Time forth and for ever-
more. Amen.*



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Volume 10, No. 1, January 1917

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